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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

31 August 1951

Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence

Subject: The Greek Elections

For more than a year there has been widespread talk in Greece of a "Papagos solution" -- the displacement of the unstable and largely ineffectual coalition cabinets which have succeeded one another since the war by a "strong man" government headed by the widely respected Marshal Papagos, until recently Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The establishment of such a government has emerged as a definite possibility with Papagos' decision to contest the 9 September parliamentary elections at the head of a new party, the Greek Rally. With the elections less than two weeks away, however, the Marshal's formal entry into politics has as yet failed to produce the band wagon effect which his unparalleled prestige in Greece had led most observers to expect.

Before Papagos threw his hat into the political ring, the Greek parties could be roughly divided into four major groups: the small parties of the far right, making up about 10 percent of the present parliament; the right centrist groups (Populist, LEK, and the Social Democrats), including about 40 percent of the deputies; the left centrist groups (the Liberals and EPEK) comprising another 40 percent; and the far left, making up a final 10 percent. One of the right centrist

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factions, LEK, hastened to disband in favor of the new Papagos party, and it appears likely that the Papagos ticket will capture a high proportion of the right centrist vote. Papagos has failed, however, to line up vote-getting supporters from the left centrist parties, and has encountered violent opposition from the King, who was once considered a principal advocate of a Papagos solution but is now deeply embittered over Papagos' criticism of the Palace entourage and his precipitate resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces at the end of May. The King has worked closely with the politicians of the far right, but has also received considerable cooperation from Premier Venizelos. In addition to exhorting politicians to steer clear of Papagos, the Palace faction has sought to weaken Papagos' influence in the army and to prevent Papagos from using the army as a source of political strength.

Predicting election results is particularly difficult in the case of Greece, where political alignments have the ephemeral character usually ascribed to Hollywood romances and where most politicians have few close ties with the electorate once they get to Athens. Enthusiasm for a reform administration under Papagos -- though not yet evident -- might sweep the country without the Marshal's getting further support from the professional politicians. Various candidates on other tickets might decide to join Papagos once they get elected. At present, however, the prospect appears as follows:

- a. Papagos is likely to head the largest delegation in the new parliament but will probably fail to get a majority. Assuming Papagos gets the bulk of the right-of-center vote and makes limited inroads into the Liberal and EPEK followings, he would gain about 100 of the 250 seats in parliament -- about as many as those going to the two left

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centrist parties combined. He could not get a clear majority, however, without inducing one of every three normally left centrist voters to deny his vote to either the Liberal slate or EPEK.

- b. Papagos will probably get first chance at forming a government and should be able to get enough support from other groups to get a working majority in parliament. Although the King might try to bypass him (as he tried in the case of Plastiras last year), Papagos would probably have enough votes, at least initially, to prevent any government he opposed from getting a vote of confidence.
- c. Papagos, as Prime Minister, would probably work more earnestly than his rivals to achieve the major US objectives in Greece: elimination of corruption and waste in the government, economic reform, and maintenance of a strong professional army unhampered by political pressures. He would continue close diplomatic and military cooperation with the US.
- d. It is quite likely, however, that Papagos would be frustrated in the reform program, much as was General Razmara in Iran, by the opposition of the Palace, the resistance of the vested interests (which are strongly represented in his own following), the unreliability of his political allies, and his own political inexperience.
- e. There is some danger that the stability of the government will be weakened by political

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interference with the army and by continued wrangling between the King and Papagos. The Marshal might eventually seek to establish a dictatorship, though there is as yet no strong indication that his thinking is running along such lines.

- f. US action or lack of action will have an important bearing on the course of events inasmuch as the US controls Greece's purse strings and is accepted by Greek leaders as an arbiter in Greek affairs.

From the US point of view, the 9 September elections thus appear to hold out little promise of an improvement of the Greek situation. Governmental instability is not only likely to continue but may well be increased by the Palace's increasingly open meddling in politics and in army affairs; eventually the long dormant question of monarchy versus republic, which was responsible for nine attempted coups d'etat between 1922 and 1937, might be revived. The one "strong man" available for a crisis appears likely to be cut down to the level of the ordinary politicians.

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